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One is Enough

13/07/2007 by Jim.

By Jim Farrell

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This past June, my wife and I were in Japan mixing business with pleasure. I had several business meetings, but we took time out to tour Tokyo, Kyoto, Kamakura, and Kiryu as well as the Tokyo National Museums' Da Vinci exhibition and Akihabara. I have traveled in Japan many times, but I am always impressed with Japanese technology.

Twelve years ago, while Motorola Semiconductor employed me, we held the annual Motorola technology press event in Austin, Texas. This event was very popular with the technical press both in the United States and internationally. We usually had a good representation from Asia and Europe as well as the United States. A key technology at this 1995 event was smartcards. Then - as it still is largely now - Europe is the smartcard technology leader. At the 1995 event, we asked the attending press at one meeting, "How many smartcards do you have in your wallet right now?" Most European editors had at least one smartcard, and most had two or more. Among the U.S. and Asian editors, there were no smartcards at all! Things have changed only slightly in the ensuing 12 years. American Express and other credit card companies are starting contactless smartcard initiatives in the U.S. and the SUICA contactless smartcard for JR (Japan Railways) travel has been a resounding success in Japan. There are dozens of other initiatives worldwide, and largely, they are successful. There are several issues with credit smartcards. In places where telephone credit verification is readily available, and relatively cheap (like in the United States) magnetic stripe credit cards make the most economic sense. They cost only a few cents (U.S.) to manufacture, and they last at least a couple of years. Microcontroller integrated circuit-based smartcards cost much more - a significant expense. Keep in mind that the major credit card providers (VISA, MasterCard, JCB, American Express and others) have a total of several hundreds of millions of cards in circulation. Today, these are virtually all magnetic stripe based. Tens of thousands of ATMs and POS (point of sale) terminals that are placed worldwide enable the system. Chances are, the magnetic stripe credit card in your pocket right now is compatible in most of these readers around the world.

Things are moving forward. Several countries now have smartcard-based national health insurance cards. These cards contain the health history of the citizen as well allergy information and other vital health information. The doctor will waste little time inquiring into the health history of the patient. In the United States, whenever you see

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a new doctor, you need to fill out lengthy repetitive forms on your health history. While necessary information for your new healthcare provider, it is wasteful and inefficient that this process must be incessantly repeated.

Returning to the 1995 Motorola Press Event, the next smartcard question – directed at the European editors – was “How many smartcards do you want to carry?” The answer – for every single European editor – was “one”. I can understand that. I personally carry three credit cards. The first is a MasterCard credit card. It is accepted virtually everywhere in the world. The second is a MasterCard Debit Card. This card allows me to retrieve local currency cash from ATMs worldwide at very favorable rates, and low service charges. The third and last card is an American Express card that I have had for 37 years, and use as a backup card when I cannot use the other cards.

During our June Japan visit we were privileged to attend the Tokyo Midtown T-Engine Forum Press Event in Tokyo. The T-Engine Forum had completely enabled the Tokyo Midtown shopping mall with over 500 RFID transponders, allowing complete navigation, information and direction via the TEF Ubiquitous Communicator. The shopper could find a specific store, find a specific type of service or product or get detailed information on the art scattered throughout the site. All of this was available via the TEF Ubiquitous Communicator. However, I am thinking back to the 1995 Motorola Press Event. To re-phrase the question, “How many devices do you wish to carry on your person?” I think the answer is still “one”. And now, the one is the cellular telephone. We have the hardware technology to do this right now. Your cellular phone can be your ubiquitous communicator, contactless credit card, navigation device, personal information portal, internet portal, entertainment media portal, telephone and your ubiquitous Wi-Fi identification resource. It is a matter of software development and international standards.

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Does CES set the blog standard for embedded shows?

09/01/2007 by Geoff.

One show I have never been to, but one day I will is CES, I'd just love to see how many of the technologies we've been involved with actually get to market and in what form they appear.

One interesting aspect of CES I have been tracking though, as an avid techno follower myself, is the Bloghaus, a blog party hosted as part of CES with bloggers allowed to register as press and given a T1 connection and room to blog from. A good aggregated set of blog posts related to CES is <http://podtechbloghaus.com/podtech/ces/CESFrontPage.htm>. I may not be at CES today, but through this medium I feel I am virtually there.

I wonder when the likes of ESC <http://www.embedded.com/esc/sv/> and Embedded World <http://www.embedded-world-2006.de/main/Page.html> will start to host similar blog parties? I see no evidence that 2007 will start that ball rolling.

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Regional Differences in Global Markets

02/01/2007 by peter.

Just what the world needs - another blog! In mitigation, I haven't seen anything online which deals with issues dear to the heart of people like us - trying to figure out the best way to promote and sell advanced technical products in rapidly globalizing markets.

Hold on just a minute - I often hear people say - as markets globalize, and companies virtualize, surely it's getting easier than ever to sell around the world? Well, yes and no. But mostly no. From our perspective, (and each of us have roughly a couple of decades perspective on the question) the mismatch between global marketing

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strategies and local/regional implementations (i.e. generating revenues) is getting ever greater. Perversely, this seems to be driven by the very trend to globalization which should be making it all so much simpler. [Villa on the Aegean Coast of Turkey near Uzumlu](#)

Which brings me to the real subject of this first post - why did we call the blog "2 Hands Clapping" anyway?

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